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ABSTRACT

Four reports describing aspects of a summer English course, designed for foreign students from a variety of backgrounds, focus on learning English through classroom lessons and extra-curricular activities. Sue Swaffield, the course director, outlines the background, organization, and staffing of the course, looking at its broad aims and role in the overall Bell program. The curriculum director, John Clark, addresses the design and development of the course, emphasizing the roles of staff and students in the evolution of instructional activities. A teacher, Joss Pinches, describes the production of a course newspaper with a group of students and shows how this activity can promote a wide range of language-learning experiences and opportunities for personal involvement. Finally, two other teachers, Gillian Richards and Matthew White, report on their groups' 4-week investigation of the media and the range of experiences and activities it offered. (MSE)

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# An Integrated Activity Course for Juniors



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# Introduction

Running residential English-language courses for young people is an important part of the work of the Bell Educational Trust, particularly in the summer. The aims of these courses are much broader than a narrow focus on the language; we see them as an important experience in the educational development of the participants.

With this in mind, we are constantly examining the structure and focus of the courses we run in order to match what actually happens in reality with our fundamental aims and objectives. This booklet is a part of that process.

It contains four reports on various aspects of a course run in 1987 in Cambridge. The course was designed to have a particular and explicit focus on activities (ie. on doing things through English rather than learning the language for its own sake), and to offer the opportunity for integrating these activities across the course programme.

This approach is very much in line with recent ideas about communicative and experiential language learning - but the practical implementation of such ideas is an area where few people have direct experience. We hope that this account of the ways in which problems (both foreseen and unforeseen) were tackled will be helpful in developing the awareness of the profession at large of the very exciting possibilities.

Sue Swaffield's background paper, written from her perspective as overall Course Director, sets this course in the context of the range of Bell Junior courses and shows how the broad aims were met. Her own particular viewpoint enables her to consider issues like staffing and resources which are crucial aspects of the implementation.

John Clark was Director of Studies on the course and his paper not only sets out the rationale for a course design of this kind, but also offers a fascinating insight into the process of involving staff and students in this development. The value of this paper is not only in terms of the insights it offers into the design of a teaching programme but also in terms of its contribution to discussions about the management of innovation.

The other two papers in this collection are reports from teachers involved in actually setting up integrated activities with their students and making them work. Joss Pinches describes the production of a course newspaper with a group of students and shows how this activity gave rise to a tremendous range of language-learning

experiences and opportunities for personal involvement. Gillian Richards and Matthew White report on their groups' 4-week investigation of The Media. Like Joss's report, this is remarkable for the evidence it presents of group and individual commitment to a theme, and the range of experiences and activities the students were engaged in.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking everybody who was involved in this course in 1987. I know from my own visits to the course just what an atmosphere of excitement and involvement was created, and I also know that such an atmosphere does not just happen. The skill and professionalism of all those involved was evident at the time - and is evident again in these reports.

Keith Morrow
Director (Education)

## Contents


A Course Director's Perspective
Sue Swaffield 5

A Director of Studies' Perspective
John Clark 12

The Course Newspaper
Joss Pinches 21

English through the Mass Media
Gillian Richards & Matthew White 30

# A Course Director's Perspective

## The aims of Bell Junior Summer Courses

The Bell Schools have been running junior courses for over twenty years, during which time there have been changes in organisation and practice, but the philosophy behind them is fundamental.

The courses aim:

1 To develop the students' use and knowledge of English according to their level through classroom lessons and extra-curricular activities.
2 To create a community in which students of different nationalities can live together and communicate in a common language, discover mutual interests and establish strong friendships.
3 To promote knowledge and experience of English culture and traditions through organised visits and contact with local people.
4 To provide an enjoyable holiday within a safe and caring environment while, at the same time, encouraging serious study of English.

The whole programme for each summer course has to be planned to ensure that the aims are achieved; this is done by providing timetabled lessons, excursions, and social and recreational activities, all organised in such a way as to encourage the use of English as the common language while taking advantage of every opportunity to meet native speakers and learn about Britain, as well as having an enjoyable time.

On the courses every effort is made to create an environment where English is the natural language of communication. The emphasis throughout is on converting a passive knowledge of the language into an active command.

Although stated separately, the aims of the Bell junior courses are inter-related, and the courses are organised in such a way that any particular activity may be fulfilling more than one aim. For example, a visit to a local pottery would undoubtedly have some language content in the preparation for the visit, while actually there, and afterwards in follow-up work. The group would be of students of mixed nationalities sharing a common experience, and the visit would provide the students with an opportunity to meet and talk with English people at their work, and to find out more about English culture and traditions. Hopefully the visit would also be enjoyable for the students! This example shows how one activity can integrate a

number of different aims. In designing the programme for our course we also wanted to ensure that the range of activities offered to the students were themselves integrated.

## The Relationship of Lessons to the Rest of the Course

The formal arena for language learning is the work in timetabled lessons, and crucial though this is, it is interesting to note that the total time students spend in class is only about 20% of their waking time. This emphasises the importance of linking what goes on in the lessons themselves, and of integrating the work undertaken in lessons with all the other aspects of the course. For some students a Bell summer course will be the first experience they have of visiting England, and certainly many students will have to adjust to being away from family and friends in a residential situation. A few students, primarily non-European, will experience considerable culture shock.

Students will be able to overcome these difficulties best if what they are experiencing is as integrated a whole as possible, rather than a number of completely different experiences with no connection between them. Junior summer courses are very short (three and a half or four weeks) and intensive, and it is important that they are as cohesive as possible, both for social adjustment and for effective learning.

## The Leys Junior Summer Course

The course held at The Leys in 1987 built on the foundations laid in 1986, the first course held at this site. There were about 120 students, aged between 15 and 17. The teaching timetable for the 1986 course was typical of Bell junior summer courses, with language and language skills work in the morning, and project and special interest periods in the afternoons. Whole and half day excursions, and a whole variety of other social and recreational activities were planned into each week.

During the planning stages for the 1987 course the desirability of integrating the different aspects of the lessons and of the course as a whole took a high priority. The concept of integration was made clear to staff at the induction course, but the details of how it was to work were developed during the course itself.

## Implications of an Integrated Approach for Staffing

An integrated approach where English language learning is approached through a range of activities demands that the teachers are not only EFL teachers, but also people who have interests, and ideally expertise, in a range of other areas. The development of the integrated programme seen on our course was largely a product of the particular staff employed.

Those teachers who were most successful were those who were confident in their EFL teaching and ready to take on new approaches, who were able to conceive of an integrated approach, who had some knowledge of different media or were able to work alongside specialists (for example in art or computers), and whose enthusiasm encouraged the students. Three specialist staff were employed, working in the areas of art, computers and ceramics. An integrated activity-based programme has implications for the recruitment of staff, since it needs staff who are sympathetic to that approach. In addition, the staff need to be seen as a whole to check that there is a balance of specialisms. The type of specialist employed needs to be related to the facilities available. In future years staff with strengths in drama and/or music would broaden and enrich our course, whereas more staff with art and computing expertise would build on the developments already made and reinforce these particular areas. However, it is not just the EFL and specialist staff for whom an integrated programme has implications. Often Residential Supervisors and others offer a special interest or option group, while sports staff have their own contribution to make to options. If the whole programme is to be truly integrated, all staff must be contributing something which is part of the whole, rather than a separate entity. The attitude on the part of the staff, and time for liaison is crucial here.

## Implications of an integrated approach for resources

The sort of work that is undertaken in an integrated approach is often not of the traditional oral and written kind that is produced in a fairly formal classroom. Students may be engaged in a wide range of activities, many of which require particular resourcing, while the final product may take many forms, for example displays, posters, a newspaper, or tape recordings. The type of resources required can be very varied, and range from the simple but very readily consumable glue sticks, to the sophistication of computers and associated software.

Although the requirement for certain resources can be predicted in advance, it is difficult to predict quantities with any degree of accuracy since their use depends on the way a particular project is developed by the students during the course. For the readily available items this is not too much of a problem since new supplies can be bought in, although repeatedly buying the same item in small quantities is often not the most economical way of acquiring it. Certain other items are not so easily obtained, and students may be frustrated by not being able to advance as they would wish. Resource-rich work creates its own problems in terms of storage, access and keeping track of the equipment. Providing a wide range of resources makes heavy demands upon the budget of the course, and sometimes difficult decisions have to be taken. It is very hard to stop the work that a particular group of students is engaged in simply because the way that they are developing it is proving too expensive. Teachers clearly have a responsibility to steer students away from a course that is going to prove impracticable, but decisions constantly have to be made about how the available funds are distributed and allocated. Inevitably, the course that the work for one group of students takes may prove to be more expensive than the work undertaken by another group of students. However, is it fair to allow one group a larger share of the budget than another group (what about the students who want to do market research into local restaurants for their project?), or does the allocation of an equal block grant for each group to spend on their work encourage unnecessary expenditure by one group while severely restricting the work of another group? On our course, each group was allowed to develop its work as it felt appropriate, but the teachers were very responsible in keeping the financial demands down to a realistic level and being economical in the use of consumable resources. Nevertheless, this type of work tends to develop its own momentum, and can be quite a strain on the budget. Another problem is the allocation of expenditure to the various budget headings; does the cost of a trip to support project work come out of the excursions allocation (traditionally for social activities), or out of a budget such as teaching aids? Small points of detail possibly, but indicative of the type of problem that can arise in implementing a new approach, and important for the Course Director in the overall administration of the course.

## Implications of an integrated approach for facilities

Obviously the ways in which any course can develop are dependent upon the facilities available and the possibilities to use those facilities. Undoubtedly the direction our course took was very strongly influenced by the facilities available. The three specialist teachers employed are all teachers at The Leys during the rest of the year, and were employed to enable full use to be made of the particular facilities. If students are encouraged to make use of a wide variety of facilities in their work, access to those facilities is crucial.

Complete groups of students may wish to use, say the art room, at the same time, while individuals or small numbers of students from other groups may also want to have access to the art room to support their work. Most specialist facilities require supervision, and someone on hand who can offer expert advice. The whole group can probably be catered for with timetabling of the facility, but access for individuals, which is crucial for true implementation of this type of approach, requires more flexibility. Ideally the facilities should be arranged in such a way as to allow as much self-access as possible, but this needs to be supported by initial training in the use of the facilities both for the students and for the non-specialist teachers.

## Evaluation

Significant advances were made along the path of developing activities which integrated the whole course. The projects chosen by the groups became the focus for their language and skills work, and extensive use was made of the resources and facilities available on site, especially computers and the art room, as well as the local area. The range of activities undertaken was enormous, and interests developed in the timetabled lesson time were expanded outside this time.

Students and teachers brought a wide variety of interests and expertise to their work, and developed them individually or shared them with others. In many cases the work developed an impressive momentum, and certain projects, notably the newspaper, came to a crescendo in the last few days of the course, involving students and staff in an amazing flurry of activity.

The ways in which the integration of the activities developed on the course meant that many problems, often of organisation and logistics, emerged and had to be solved quickly and on the spot. This

required flexibility and willingness on the part of all the staff, and a sense of humour when the communication systems within the course could not keep up with the speed of the developments! These difficulties should be fewer and easier in future years, but are to some extent a function of this type of course - one where the direction and form of study is not prescribed beforehand, but is reactive to the particular staff, students and opportunities.

It is the role of the EFL staff to oversee and guide the work that is being undertaken by the students, and it is the intention on an integrated course that the activities undertaken are as fully integrated with the whole course as possible. This can put a strain on the EFL teachers as their brief appears to become much larger. Their responsibility is in fact to help co-ordinate all the different areas of work and experience to which the students are exposed, rather than to take total responsibility for them. It is essential that teachers are helped to become aware of, and happy with, both the breadth and limitations of their job; uncertainty can easily lead to stress and a feeling on the part of the EFL staff that they are running the whole of the course on their own! The other side of the coin is that the non-EFL specialist staff can feel that their contribution to the course is not so highly valued, or that their own particular contributions to the course are subsidiary to the specific language teaching. During the induction course there should be time for all the staff to understand the nature of an integrated approach, and to appreciate their contribution to it. Liaison between different categories of staff, and joint planning on an equal footing is vital for the success of the activities and for overall staff morale.

Awareness of this possible problem is particularly needed by senior staff, who must do all they can to prevent the build-up of any tension among staff, and react immediately to alleviate it. Whilst recognising the incredible value of an integrated programme of activities, and the success of the integration that was achieved on our course, it is worth considering the extent to which integration can be taken. Some parts of the course will be seen to be very closely linked (primarily all timetabled lessons), but the place of other aspects, especially the excursions, needs to be carefully considered. One of the main functions of excursions is to complement the language work undertaken, perhaps by providing a stimulus or by reinforcement. Whilst doing this they should of course be enjoyable, but there are certain practical considerations which may cut across these requirements. For example, excursions are often organised on a

group basis, but students may have close friends in other groups and find that they are separated on trips as well as in the classroom. On our course a balance was struck by arranging the half-day excursions by groups, but students were able to be with friends from any group on the whole day excursions.

## Conclusion

An integrated approach is a most valuable and effective one for achieving the aims of the Bell Junior Courses, and is an approach which could be adopted in a number of different situations. It is especially appropriate for short,intensive courses. Particular demands are made upon staffing, resources and facilities, but if planned and implemented well, the rewards for students and staff can be very great.

Sue Swaffield

# A Director of Studies' Perspective

One might almost expect to be accused of overstating the obvious in beginning an article on junior summer courses in England by stating that there are a great many differences between such courses and conventional year-round language courses overseas. Experience, however, has shown me that whilst in theory such differences may well be obvious, in reality, many Summer language courses in England are little more than conventional language courses on a more intensive scale supplemented by excursions and a social programme.

The aim of this article, however, is not to engage in polemics about the design of language programmes. It is rather to describe one approach to managing the academic side of a Summer language course for Juniors in the hope of passing on useful information and experience to the profession. The approach is based upon the belief that both students and parents expect something more from a holiday language programme in England than is on offer year round at home. And that furthermore, they hope for something that is more than simply a language course or a good holiday - something which is ultimately more than the sum of these two parts.

It is important first of all to sketch in the background and state some of the reasons for embarking upon the approach taken. The course at the Leys in Cambridge is one of a number of satellite courses run by the Bell Educational Trust for young people during the summer months. It is fully residential and is held at a large private school in the centre of Cambridge. The course caters for students aged betweeen 15 and 17 years from a variety of backgrounds and countries. In 1987 there were over one hundred students from 23 different countries with a good balance between the sexes. The school itself is very well equipped in terms of facilities and we are fortunate to have a fairly free hand with regard to their use. In addition to this, the presence on the staff of a number of non-language teaching specialists who teach at the Leys all year round contributed greatly to the smooth running of the course.

The design of the programme was influenced not only by the expectations of students and parents, but also by factors of *appropriateness*. I mean by this the degree to which the programme meets both the long and short term needs of students and makes maximum use of the conditions and environment. Thus, a course can be said to be appropriate, in varying degrees, to both its

participants and its situation. Another consideration influencing our approach is a view of language and how languages are learned. We will consider each of these elements in turn and try to show how they affected decisions about the nature of the programme.

## Individual Differences

One often reads in books or journals about individual differences between learners and yet little is ever written about individual differences with regard to teachers. On a course of this type the latter is brought to the fore as much as the former. Out of a total course staff of 30, no fewer than 22 had direct teaching contact with the students. There was a wide cross-section of age, background, experience, attitude and general approach to learning that had to be reconciled under the umbrella of one course. Whilst there were obvious benefits for students in having such a large number of teachers, in terms of exposure to a variety of language and approaches to learning, there was always a danger that such diversity would lead to a very disjointed programme with admitted highs and lows but no continuity. In addition to differing attitudes towards the educational side of the programme there were the inevitable personality clashes amongst staff to be reconciled.

One must expect personality differences between any group of people, and participants on a language course are no exception. However, with the students on a course like ours, other factors may take on greater prominence. Firstly the tremendous cultural differences between the nationality groups can lead to misunderstandings and contribute towards different expectations of the learning situation. Individuals and groups bring with them their own preconceptions and misconceptions about other groups and the situation itself.

In addition, a student's previous experience can also affect her/his receptiveness to the course. A course which merely replicates a student's previous learning experience may be boring to some students yet safe to others, whilst a course that is radically different may be exciting or overwhelming depending upon the individual concerned.

On a more specific level, and of particular importance to a language course, are differences between the linguistic background and language learning experiences of the students. Some of our students spoke languages which used non-Romanic alphabets and some had native languages from non Indo-European groups. Some students

had very little language learning experience whilst others were bilingual. Nationalities such as Swedes have far fewer problems with English pronunciation than Japanese students. Israeli students' abilities in oral skills far outweighed written. Some students had learned English only by grammar translation methods whilst others had little or no experience of writing in English. A conventional type of language programme using a typical *global* syllabus could not hope to reconcile such different linguistic needs. In addition, all the emotional and personal differences of being part of a learning group are often heightened by being in an alien and unfamiliar situation.

## Environmental Factors

If the single most important factor in determining the nature of a language programme is the participants, then second to this must be the situation itself. For four weeks, both students and teachers must live together as part of a community and it is important to foster a feeling of trust and belonging. If one attempts to nurture such ideas only outside the classroom then one is faced with the almost inevitable danger of dividing the programme into what goes on inside and outside the classroom. Therefore in order to promote the idea of individual development and autonomy within the programme as a whole such ideas must be extended into the classroom.

A second important difference between a summer course and a year-round language programme is the intensity of classroom contact time. Within the space of one month the students have 84 hours contact time for English, which amounts to virtually one year's study in a normal school context. It goes without saying that conventional language teaching over such an intense period would not only be boring, tiresome and demotivating but also, because of the law of diminishing returns, would not be very profitable in terms of language learned in relation to time invested. So there is clearly a need for variety in the lessons themselves to maintain interest and motivation. Also the nature of the language learning situation itself is radically different. The course participants are in a situation where the only common medium of communication is English, both in and out of the lessons. In addition to this, whenever they leave the course site students are exposed to and required to use authentic language to carry out authentic tasks. Thus for up to 15 hours a day some students are required to speak nothing but English in order to communicate.

Thus we are faced with the reality of a true immersion learning situation. No matter what teaching approaches are adopted, the medium of education is always English. Whatever the context of the lessons we can be sure that students are getting a huge amount of practice in the language itself. The problem for the language teacher becomes not one of ensuring sufficient exposure and practice but rather of maintaining and furthering motivation and interest.

## Language Learning

Any approach to language learning is also dependent upon certain beliefs about the nature of language itself and the nature of the language learning process.

Fundamental to this approach is the belief that language is more than the sum of its parts and that it is best learned by engaging in the holistic activity of communication rather than merely studying these parts. In addition, language is not simply made up of unrelated skills; rather the skills form part of a whole communication network. It follows that authentic language is best acquired by engaging in authentic language tasks rather than by learning in a classroom. Finally, our approach stems from the belief that learning is most effective when motivation is high, and that motivation is fuelled by student autonomy in the learning process.

## An Integrated Programme

Some of the difficulties outlined above can be overcome at the pre-planning stage whilst others only emerge once the course starts or even whilst it is in progress. The individual differences and requirements of the course participants only begin to unfold once the course commences. It is perhaps for this reason that many Summer Courses follow closely the content of published materials, at least in terms of the syllabus, as this facilitates maximum pre-planning and preparation. However, for many of the reasons outlined above, such a solution was not regarded as satisfactory. Instead, the timetable itself became the framework out of which the overall approach grew, and this was allowed to develop according to the individual needs of teachers and students.

The basic aims of Bell Junior Summer Courses are spelled out in Sue Swaffield's article elsewhere in this collection and so will not be repeated here. Broadly speaking they cover four areas: *language development*, *cultural enrichment*, *community spirit* and *enjoyment*. The aim of our academic approach was to fuse these four elements

within lesson time and to bridge the gap between lessons and activities, events and environment outside the classroom.

The integration of the various elements of the course provided a focus for the teacher and the starting point of an overall approach. Project work seemed one way of building links between the classroom and the environment and this was a suggestion on the timetable itself, though to what degree this would become a major component of the programme, we were unsure. The bulk of the timetable was rather unimaginatively labelled *Coursebook and Skills*, with *Special Interest Activities*, *Projects* and *Excursions* making up the afternoon slots. Each class had different teachers for the different lessons which made the idea of integrating the components of the programme more difficult.

Bearing in mind the different levels and needs of our students there was no one simple solution to this problem. Individualised instruction and learner autonomy seemed one answer but this did not necessarily suit all teachers nor even all learners for that matter, many of whom were used to more guidance in the learning process. In addition, true autonomy in the learning process must begin with teacher autonomy in terms of approaches, methods and materials. Teacher-centred management of the programme was the first stage of this process.

Thus, from the beginning all teachers were asked to take an active part in the decision-making process. The first such decision involved the names of groups for identification purposes. It was generally agreed that groups should not be labelled alphabetically or numerically, since labels highlighted the idea of grading, which we were anxious to play down. An initial brainstorming session failed to produce a satisfactory set of group names and so staff were asked to consider the problem later. Ideas began to emerge and were quickly circulated by word of mouth, and soon the idea of using the home town of the group tutor as a group name emerged and met with general approval. The names were meaningful, contained an element of personal investment, and created a good ice-breaking activity at the start of the course. Even more importantly a precedent had been set in so far as decisions taken by teachers could be seen to be acted upon, even when emerging through informal channels.

Another important element on promoting teacher autonomy was the two day Induction Programme which took place prior to the students' arrival. During the course of the induction programme a number of slots were allotted to the Director of Studies to deal with matters

concerning the academic side of the course such as the Materials Room, the Timetable/Lesson types, use of equipment, etc. The sessions on the Materials Room and the resources of the Leys took the form of a simple description of what was available. No attempt was made at this stage to suggest how these resources should be used as it was felt that this might to some extent restrict teachers. A short introduction to word processing was included in order to encourage teachers to use these facilities with students.

This introduction of what was available at the Leys was followed on Day 2 of the Induction Programme by a session labelled *Integrated Programme*. The aim of this session was to present a spring-board from which ideas would grow about how to fuse the sometimes apparently disparate elements of the course and the timetables. In order not to be prescriptive the staff were not told what type of work was expected in particular lessons. The timetable was described as an administrative convenience and it was suggested that labelling the various lesson types was preferable to leaving the timetable blank, both for students and teachers. Moreover, it provided some security for teachers less confident of project based work. Two teachers who had taught at the Leys on the 1986 course were then asked to talk about their experiences. The remainder of the session then took the form of a discussion with all staff contributing ideas towards the types of project which might be undertaken. The most important feature of the initial sessions was the acceptance of all ideas as a basis for further development. Staff contributed freely, supporting one another's ideas and gradually a spirit of co-operation began to develop.

An additional session on *Activities for the First Day* was added to the programme at the request of some of the teachers. This session was led by Matthew White and again took the form of a presentation of ideas followed by a general brainstorming session and the free exchange of exercises, games and brief lesson plans.

In this way the foundations were laid in the Induction Programme. There was maximum opportunity for teachers to take control of their own programme and the full co-operation of all members of staff towards one another's work was developing. It was hoped that such autonomy in the decision-making process would be passed on from the teachers to the students in order to maximise students' involvement in their own learning programme. At the same time those teachers who were less familiar with notions of student autonomy had the full support of their colleagues and a timetable which offered some guidance on

lesson type. I described my own role as principally one of facilitator in helping teachers to find materials appropriate to their aims.

As the first few days passed it became clear that teachers were indeed all handling the situation differently. Those familiar with the philosophies of Primary Education were freely adapting ideas into a Project based approach, whilst other teachers required more guidance. In one group, a Project inaugarated by the teacher failed to spark enthusiasm and the students asked if they could divide into groups and do smaller projects of their own choosing. These proved very successful since they were self motivating. In another group the students themselves chose a number of topics and then presented the case for the topic of their choice. Voting then took place to decide democratically upon the choice of project to be undertaken. In yet another group the project was clearly teacher-chosen and led but the tasks themselves were meaningful, absorbing and student centred. The relative degree of student autonomy did not relate to the level of the students but rather to the personality of the group as a whole including the teacher.

There is clearly no one rule on how to set up project-based language work. It is all too easy to suggest that the projects must develop out of the students' own interests but this is to ignore the importance of the teachers' role in the learning process. Teachers are as individual and different as students and all approach project work in their own way. Just as it is the teachers' role to guide students so it is the role of the Director of Studies to guide teachers, and we often learn from the example set by others.

## Activity-based Projects

There were a number of staff meetings in the first week and a half in which the teachers met to exchange ideas and experiences. The first such meeting involved a brainstorming session on how to use the Art Room for language work. This generated a great deal of enthusiasm and classes began to use these facilities on the following day. The second meeting involved staff attempts to teach themselves to use the video camera. The product was abysmal to say the least, but again an important precedent was set. All teachers were given a chance at all roles in the process and we all had a great deal of fun. It was obvious to all involved that, used in the same way, the camera could be equally enjoyable in the classroom, and would facilitate a great deal of real language use. Such practical experience showed us all that the process of learning can be at least as important as the product.

Thus through encouragement and experience, teachers began to use all the facilities of the Leys and Cambridge itself during much of the lesson time. The focus of the language work was on the task or activity and not upon the language itself. The Art Room provided perhaps the freest form of expression whilst the word processors allowed for greater focus on form. Lessons were linked thematically through each group's own particular project. One example of such activity based lessons linked by theme can be seen in the work of the project on Punks by Claire Hargreaves' group. Lessons included designing a record sleeve; designing and making Punk outfits out of plastic bin liners for Prince Charles and Lady Diana; a fashion parade of the outfits; writing newspaper articles on the word processor about the event and photographing the winning outfits; an outing to the second-hand shops of Cambridge to buy Punk fashion accessories with only 10p each; and a trip to London to interview Punks.

These activities utilised all language skills in a meaningful way and guidance by the teachers ensured that all skills were practised, while the word processors provided valuable time for reflection upon more discrete aspects of language.

There were innumerable examples of student and teacher ingenuity in all the projects undertaken, and the focus throughout the course was firmly upon practising, and therefore learning, by doing.

## Evaluation

The aims of the course have already been stated as being much broader than simply language improvement. Evaluation in terms of these aims took the form of formal and informal discussion between members of staff on the participation, involvement and activities of the students. Students who did not appear to be fulfilling their own potential or who simply were not enjoying the course were easily identified in this way.

When dealing with the holistic development of students as individuals, testing or quantifiable evaluation is impossible. A recent approach to assessment stemming from contemporary approaches in mainstream education is that of self-assessment. Perhaps students could be asked to assess their own progress, which may give a truer picture of the success of this type of course.

Another possible approach to the problem of student evaluation can be found in student diaries reflecting upon the course as it is in progress. Such diaries can prove very illuminating for teachers and students

regarding the reactions of individuals to their work and such things as group dynamics.

It would be wrong to suggest that integrated project-based programmes are applicable to all teachers and students in all situations. Nor must we pretend such courses are without problems. Our course was very demanding upon teachers' time and required a great deal of patience, dedication and hard work. However, I feel sure staff and students will agree that the time and effort was well spent and that the course was a success. It may be that we cannot get a more balanced evaluation of this type of course than through the impressionistic views of the individuals taking part.

John Clark

# The Course Newspaper

## Introduction

The newly opened Rugg Centre at The Leys School provided exciting opportunities for students to try their hands at Art, Ceramics, Computing, and at making a course newspaper using the *Interword* word-processing facility of the BBC computers. This was as new an experience for the ten students who chose this option as it was for me, and none of us would have predicted the excitement, commitment and fun which came out of it. We all enjoyed making the paper; we all learnt a lot; and we all felt a great sense of pride in the final product. The day before the first session I took the group on a visit to the local paper, *The Cambridge Evening News*, where they were shown around all aspects of producing the paper, from reporters typing in their copy to printing-plates being changed for the late edition. This visit provided a good initial stimulus for the students, who all showed great interest in the practicalities of production, and were keen to start their own.

## Resources

Five BBC micros and a worktop area for cutting and pasting were set aside for exclusive use by the Newspaper option group. We were also welcome to use any vacant terminals in the Computing Room where a computer course was run concurrently. Added to this were: a printer, the course office photocopier and The Leys School photocopier when ours proved unable to handle printing the Paper. Most invaluable, however, was the expertise of Dr Bob Gidden, Head of Computing at The Leys School (and that of his son, Tom) given freely at all times of the day and night.

## Aims

Whilst my overriding consideration was naturally to produce something to give the students at the end of the Course, I also wanted to involve them as much as possible in all areas of its production so as to generate the feeling that it was their Paper. I hoped to get all 120 students to contribute something to the content, and that this content would be a record of the four weeks at The Leys, triggering memories of characters and events when leafed through months later. For those students in the Newspaper option group I decided to apportion roles which would involve them in decision-making, reporting, administering and generally dealing with all the practicalities of production.

## Organisation

I expected production to run roughly along the lines below.

*Articles by students collected*
*Edited*
*Printed*
*Put into sections*
*Pasted up*

Here, collecting work could mean either gathering hand-written pieces, or taking the relevant details if the work was saved on the computer network. I initially envisaged the students taking several roles along this chain:

*collectors*: each with responsibility for a class;
*page setters*: each dealing with a particular section;
*editors*.

I also wanted them to attempt to sell advertising space and advertise the Paper itself to the other students, as well as take on the roles of reporters and contributors themselves. Because of the limited number of terminals (5) I expected the editing and laying-out to operate in tandem, with the students perhaps swapping the roles from week to week. However, the production chain proved not to be quite as fluent as above, with the result that the organisation tended to evolve to meet the problems that arose.

## Roles

Each student was given the role of class representative, and of reporter. I asked the students to volunteer for the other roles.

### *Class representatives*

Each took responsibility for one of the ten classes, whipping up enthusiasm, keeping their class informed, chivvying them along if contributions weren't forthcoming, and collecting them when completed. Hand-written articles were simply gathered and sorted into the relevant section folder for typing and editing. I asked teachers to make full use of their reps rather than seek me out to pass on articles or to ask questions, as such a bypass would undermine the system. I hoped to create the need for the Newspaper staff to understand exactly what they were doing and also to emphasise the use of English as a common language.

Not surprisingly, the students who were of an advanced level in English were more effective than those who were not, and in this

respect I think the latter students should be given more support in the form of careful briefing, a partner to work with, notes to help and so on. The essential thing is to enable the reps to become the authorities in this area rather than the class teacher.

### *Writing articles and reporting*

From the first session I allowed the option students to write articles of their own choice, or suggested things if they had no ideas. Several times I found that the three students with limited English hadn't volunteered for a role and in these cases I found it hard not to marginalise them. By this I mean that I'd either attach them to another student with a proper task, or I'd try to set them off writing their own article. In both cases I wasn't fully incorporating them into the session, and they must have felt this. Further, as all the students made great demands on me for assistance, it was all too easy to pass them over or give them insufficient time, particularly as they often had difficulty expressing their needs and weren't clear of the overall pattern of what was going on. They were alienated. The advanced students tended to write articles in their own time and use the sessions for me to respond to them. The beginners needed help throughout the whole writing process. They need more support in the structure of the session - more teacher time, more co-operative writing with the other students, and helpful guidelines with the various activities they might write.

In the second session I asked for volunteers to report on the social activities of the week ahead. I hoped this would fulfill two purposes: it would involve the students in a real newspaper task, and would contribute to the stock of personalities and events I wanted the paper to record. The tasks included writing reports, taking photographs, buying postcards for illustrations, obtaining recipes and conducting interviews. Tape recorders and a polaroid camera were available. Not all the students completed the tasks, although the articles which were produced were all of a very high standard. Helpful worksheets could be offered in the form of press releases prepared in advance from a rough diary of the social events, and updated when necessary. More importantly, though, students need to be briefed in a week-ahead session and again, if possible, on the day of the event, and this then needs to be followed up with a feed-back session.

### *Telesales*

The task of trying to sell advertising space became a four-stage stage process:

i) composing a letter inviting people to place an advertisement;
ii) making a phone call to follow up i);
iii) receiving a letter in reply;
iv) writing a letter of confirmation.

We targeted mainly other Bell courses, but also Oxford Unversity Press, charging two pounds for an advert (size not specified) which they could supply or we could design. This was one of the most successful activities, providing an opportunity to use English in written and oral form at a very high level and for a very real purpose. The letters were really sent and advertisements were really placed. Three students took on this role. Each took great care in writing their letters and were able to match their hard work with a very professional layout. They found it particularly satisfying to receive a personally addressed reply. When Sandra Antonovic received the first from her tutor at the start of the morning's lesson, she immediately excused herself and rushed to show me, glowing with excitement and pride. The only problem was time. In all we sent six letters but only received three replies simply because some of the letters weren't written and posted until relatively late in the course. It would clearly be an advantage to prepare the basic groundwork for this activity beforehand, in the form of skeleton worksheets for the students to follow, a list of names and addresses to target, and perhaps even an approach made to these places in advance in order to make them aware of the exercise.

## Editing

The editing tasks fell into various categories:

### *Spacing and justifying*

In order to achieve a good quality layout it is important to check not only the spacing between words, but also the correct placing of punctuation marks. Interword has a string search facility which can quickly locate and replace incorrect placing of punctuation, eg the user can request the computer to replace "." with ". " (ie "full-stop, no space" with "full-stop, space"). This is important to the layout, as without a space after a punctuation mark the computer reads that mark as part of the next word. This facility does have an optional verification mode - the user simply presses Y or N - for cases where alteration is unnecessary. These and other valuable word-

processing skills can be mastered by students with the correct expertise on hand.

Some students also learnt how to justify. This was usually one of the final editorial tasks, wasn't difficult to learn and improved the look of an article considerably.

### *Spelling*

Interword also has a spellcheck facility which, like the string search, requires a slightly more advanced ability to use the computer.

### *Punctuation, grammar and usage*

I initially left this to the discretion of the editors, but such was their enthusiasm that they tended to be ruthless. Clearly if a piece is over-corrected it ceases to be the original work of the writer. I therefore encouraged the editors to correct any errors which came under i) and to leave the rest of the text intact, except in cases where the meaning was obscured. (This had the additional advantage of reducing their workload). We were able to include most of the articles submitted, but only because all hands manned the processors in the panic of the last week. Clearly, were the volume of work greater and/or time more restricted, then editorial decisions would have to be taken regarding rejecting or truncating articles. This in itself would hopefully provoke valuable language work between the Newspaper staff - justifying their decisions and reaching agreements - and between editors and contributors discussing the reworking of articles. This latter would need to be done in class time, but I think the integration would be beneficial all round, particularly if the original submission had come out of a class activity.

When I explained the role of editor in the first session, the five students who volunteered were all advanced English speakers, those of lower standard presumably feeling unequal to the task. Those five (and one of these in particular) did all the editing in the subsequent sessions, until the final week when several staff were also co-opted to clear the backlog of material. However, all the Newspaper staff did have at least a sample experience of editing their own work, and I certainly think it possible for students of all levels to assist in this task, given the right support.

The Newspaper provided tremendous motivation to write. It also provided the editors with a tremendous motivation to correct. Vera Schumacher, for example, checking through a review of the Old Vic's production of *Kiss Me Kate*, actually phoned the box-office to

enquire whether the music was live in order to get the facts straight. This was an exercise of which I thoroughly approved, of course - using English for a real purpose. But more than this I think it gives an indication of the sheer intensity with which students can work if they're motivated. It seems a waste to cloister this energy in a once-a-week option slot. The ideal working situation, I think, would be for all editors to go into the classroom and respond directly to the writers, working alongside them to discuss and improve the work. This would reinforce the sense of writing for an audience in a much more credible way than a teacher response might. In this way the enthusiasm of the editing staff could be used to validate the revision of work, generate discussion about the work and motivate the students to write more.

## Layout

I originally intended the layout to work in tandem with the editing, the latter passing their work onto the former, once it had been printed. Unfortunately, because I wasn't able to print most of the work until the final week, this activity went a little less smoothly than planned. In fact it was chaos. Fortunately, many staff and all the Newspaper students gave up large chunks of their free time to assist during the last week, some working well into the night to get their particular pages completed. The procedure was simple: I printed as much as I could as quickly as I could. This was then guillotined and fed into the simplified section trays from where they were taken to be pasted up. This wasn't particularly efficient. Articles got mislaid, others found their way into the wrong section, and so on. Nevertheless, it was a pleasure to work in such an atmosphere. I was particularly overwhelmed by the students' patience and consideration towards each other. Their commitment and co-operation at this point was phenomenal - the more so for being conducted entirely in what was for them a foreign language. Late into the final evening, and with several teachers helping out, the traditional roles of student and teacher became reversed. Students explained to newcomer staff what they were doing, and sent them off to perform various tasks such as finding illustrations or making reductions on the photocopier. When we finally had to send the last three surviving students to bed at two o'clock on the final evening, Cecilia Mueller was still giving precise instructions about her layout as she was dragged away. Every page of the Newspaper illustrates the great care and pride they took in getting things just right: the margins placed correctly for stapling; the headlines worked out to fit the

articles; the illustrations carefully laid out, each with a caption and so on. It's clearly their paper because their efforts were so vital to its production, and I think it was this feeling that generated so much commitment.

## Advertising the paper

In the first session I gave each rep an A4 sized notice to advertise the paper and suggest possible articles in each of their respective classrooms. Two students took on the roles of advertising for this first session and made colourful posters for general display around the school, some encouraging articles, and the rest announcing a competition to design the front cover. Unfortunately, there was no response to this latter and I wondered about the effectiveness of posters. Fortunately, two of the Newspaper students made a brilliant cover themselves in the final official session. I thought we could make posters to keep up interest in the paper, but this was better done using the class reps, so on the whole the advertising role had a limited lifespan.

## Practicalities

I'd like to mention some of the practical problems that were encountered during the production of our newspaper. These may be relevant only to the facilities of our course, but nevertheless I think this aspect requires consideration. Two problems hindered progress most significantly:

a) collecting all the work into a single directory on the computer hard disc;
b) sorting out a system to allow different styles of print to be used. Both were successfully negotiated only through the expert advice and help of Bob Gidden.

The complexity of the process and the need for expertise on the hardware, it could be argued, might well daunt and alienate students using a foreign language. I can only think of one from the Option group for whom this might well have been true. I was quite amazed at how so many of them understood the system and were able to advise and help each other in its application - in English! They tended to be perfectly capable of seeing through the laying-out of their particular pages, and would often give instructions to staff at points of technical difficulty, such as headlining or photocopying, as opposed to asking their help. Hence, I don't think there was a sense of dependency, or a sense that they weren't the ones who were doing the real work.

## What went on in the newspaper option

### *My input*

Brief intro - Roles apportioned - Gave reps an advert and list of suggested articles - Gave class reps worksheets to help class members write articles - Gave reporters assignments

### *What the students did*

Telesales (2) - 1 letter written
Advertising (3) - Posters made
Editors (2) - Devised sections
Reporters (3) - Started features of own choice
Telesales - more letters
Editors - edited and selected articles - typed handwritten submissions
Advertising (1) - made advert for first client
Reporters - continued features
Telesales - final letters
Editors - continued editing and placing work into one file
Reporters - wrote articles from assignments - continued own features
Editors - continued editing
Reporters - completed assignments and features
Layout - started laying out pages
Cover (2) - designed and completed cover

### *What the students did outside the sessions*

Phone call to follow up letter (1) - Posters put up around school (3) - Class reps (10) spoke to classes and collected work - Reporters started assignments - Reps collected work - Reporters (2) conducted an interview - Editor (1) made a phone call - Editing continued - Reporters completed some articles - Layout (10) - everyone assisted - Stapling (2) - stapled the paper late on last night

*Notes:* - Although this gives some indication of the range of activities and the effort put in by the students, it doesn't take account of dozens of little jobs that were so necessary, nor of the large amount of free time they willingly gave up, especially in the last week. Neither does it take account of the generous help of staff, especially in the last week. - As the *My Input* section suggests, once I'd apportioned roles the students were by and large self-activated (?!). My role was more facilitatory.

## The sections

Brigitte Langevin and Vera Schumacher devised ten sections, into which completed articles could be placed, during the first session, and these were readily adopted. However, because of the printing rush of the last week they weren't used as they should have been. Also, it wasn't always clear what sort of work went into some of the sections, and I found it necessary to do away with a few of them in the final week when I found there were no articles in them. Nevertheless, I think it essential to break the Paper up into more manageable sections, over each of which a pair of students could take charge for the duration of the Option. Likewise, I see no reason not to plan ahead for certain kinds of work you might reasonably expect. A good example would be the section *Classes* in which a photograph of each class accompanied the names and addresses of the students in it, along with an optional piece of writing about themselves. Cecilia Mueller took on the unenviable task of matching names and addresses with the right photos, but this sort of laborious work could be prepared before the start of the course. Also, in this example, the writing could come out of an early lesson in which students are getting to know each other, which would neatly integrate the Newspaper option with classwork.

## Conclusion

Producing a course newspaper was an activity which successfully integrated language learning with the development of the interpersonal skills which are a prime focus of Bell summer courses. All those who took part thoroughly enjoyed the range of experiences which they found themselves involved in. They learnt a lot of English - and a lot about themselves.

Joss Pinches

# English Through The Mass Media

We chose *English through Media* as a theme for our advanced classes so that we could use the students' knowledge and ideas as a resource in our language teaching. Students bring a substantial amount of media literacy into the classroom with them; they are frequently more knowledgeable about and up to date with TV programmes, advertisements and developments in video for example, than the teacher. Learners from different nationalities bring with them different experiences of Media structures and conventions; in our classes we could expect genuinely stimulating communicative work when they compared their countries' different assumptions about newspapers, advertising, commercial television, "taste" and social taboos.

The greatest myth about the Media is that it occurs naturally and is unproblematic - in short, that "that's the way it is". To challenge that you need only to compare it with the Media of other countries. We had at least five or six nationalities in each group of twelve, so the dynamic for discussion and perhaps the debunking of myths was in-built. We realised we could also stand this "if you want to understand your own Media, look at another country's . . ." argument on its head. If the students on the course wanted to understand Britain better, they could study **its** Media. We were bound to be using a variety of current affairs materials and the students would draw their own conclusions from the tone of British tabloids, the BBC voice, Channel 4 and so on. Studying British media on a language course would have, for the students, the valuable by-product that they would become better acquainted with aspects of contemporary Britain. Young people may be well versed in the mass media, but they have not always questioned their assumptions about it. We hoped to tap their knowledge and motivate them to compare and contrast their ideas, re-considering what they felt they already knew. More often than not we would be raising questions for them to answer, not from any authoritative material we could provide for them but from debate and discussion. This would be genuinely communicative use both of the media themselves in providing the basis for the discussion, and of classroom time when real debate would be taking place in English.

## Mass media for language exploitation

Having the Media as a theme gave a language focus to each activity. Whether dealing with newspaper articles, advertisements, radio broadcasts or television programmes, we were intrinsically involved with words, language and communication.

The spin-off of this kind of work would be an element of personal and social education - considering how and why people communicate and what factors influence success, failure, or even whether communication happens at all. The following list shows some of the language areas that can be focussed on through use of the media.

*Newspapers / Magazines:* Reported speech, clear syntax, summarising, editing, reading for gist and specific information, skimming and scanning.
*Advertising:* Captions, cliches, puns, "vogue" language, humour
*Radio:* Aural/Oral clarity, reported speech, listening for gist and specific information, interviewing, narratives, linking language.
*Television and Video:* Verbal and visual narratives, listening for gist and specific information, linking language.

Discussion of the different styles of language in the Media encouraged an oblique approach to English language learning. We focussed not on language form but on its use; concentrating on a discussion about interpreting images, for example, the groups were so engrossed with the subject that the production of language was unreserved and unselfconscious. The students were highly involved and motivated.

Although some language relevant to the Media would be considered specialist, we realised that the lexis the students were acquiring, along with new knowledge, was valuable in everyday conversations. We all talk about yesterday's news, films, commercials, pop videos and inaccurate reporting, and it is necessary for advanced non-native speakers to be aware of modern media vocabulary (for example *jingle, tabloid, editorial, marketing, hype, viewer, product).*

## Personal and social development

Media Studies is about communication and it highlights the existence of a variety of points of view. Throughout the programme we were developing critical response to the Media and the groups began to accept that there was no single orthodoxy or "right reply". The subject they were dealing with valued different opinions and frustrated easy arrival at "teacher pleasing" consensus. When looking at slides of signs and images, for example, the students

expressed a variety of ideas and responses. Open-ended discussion created a more relaxed atmosphere and increased the students' spontaneity, encouraging natural language use. From the outset, students participated in many paired and group activities. This enabled them to develop evaluative listening skills and to engage in genuine conversations - important for building up social skills. This was particularly evident when they took part in simulating a radio broadcast - "*Have you got that story?*" - "*No, I've put it down*" - "*Have you finished? ...*". "*Hurry up! - We've only got a minute*" - "*I know, I'm finishing it ... Wait ...*". Peer group learning also enabled all the students to use language. When using the video camera, for example, some less confident speakers were able to demonstrate their prowess in filming and found a real purpose for trying to communicate - explaining techniques to other students. We found that most activities incorporated aspects of personal and social development arising from the background theme of communication.

## Sequence of the four-week cyclical programme

*Week One* Tap student awareness of education and attitudes to language learning. Establish oral skills as prime goal, the media as the main theme of the course. Introduce different media (newspaper article and TV programme) on the education topic. Begin creative thinking and visualising - first activities in visual literacy; language of shape and colour, conventions of perspective. Look at paintings more closely.

*Week Two* Build visual literacy work into creative abstract painting. Broaden visual analysis to cover all media and "discover" we each read the world differently, validating different points of view in the group. Body language as communication. Role plays. Deconstructing posed photographs and advertisements. Stereotyping in newspapers and magazines.

*Week Three* Review newspapers and magazines. Factual narratives - more fiction than fact? Inaccuracy and bias in reporting. Images and words together creating meanings and suggested readings. Run simulations on front page news and local radio news to highlight sensationalism and news priorities. Different formats for different media. Encourage production of material for the course newspaper.

*Week Four* Move on to TV and making a video. Bring questions of design, image, style and marketing together, prior to simulation of making, marketing and advertising a shoe. De-brief to draw analogies with real life products and advertisements. Return to visual literacy

and enjoying paintings with visit to local gallery; students already familiar with some works, having used postcards of them in role play. Informally establish whether they feel they respond to images differently now, compared with the beginning of the course.

NB. We interspersed the *English through Media* course with other material and activities to give variety of subject matter and pace.

## The activities

In this section, we have set out the activities we designed to develop language skills, functions and lexis through the *English through Media* theme. The activities marked with an * are explained in greater detail after the four weekly schedules.

### *Week One*

Attitude to language learning questionnaire.
Students fill in own and compare with partner, giving reasons for answers. Paired interviewing.
Write about your experience of learning English.
Narrative writing
Homework Introduction to word processing. *Transfer written homework on to wordprocessor - peer and teacher correction / development,
re-drafting.

*Oxford's Amazing Adolescent.* (Article on Ruth Lawrence, academic prodigy) - Reading for meaning. Directed questions. Group discussion of responses. Paired discussion of advantages and disadvantages of being brought up like Ruth Lawrence.

*Being happy is what matters most* (video documentary about Summerhill, the famous free school) Directed listening. Paired/ group discussion on style of education.

Visit to local newspaper.

Impressions of other countries through the media. Reading for gist and specific information.

Thinking creatively; drawing abstract shapes, interpreting each other's shapes in pairs. Listening and acting upon instructions.

### *Week Two*

Connotations of shape and colour; personal response, comparison between countries. Directed questions on relevant chapter in *How to enjoy paintings* Andrew Wright, CUP :1986

* Art room - free expression using colours, shapes of choice and words to describe reactions to them
* Introducing visual analysis through slides; communicative activity describing and drawing projected images (pairs) (from BFI packs *Reading Pictures and The Semiology of the Image).*

Body language interpretation - matching written descriptions to body language (magazine picture and article of Gary Hart with Donna Rice) - paired work.

* Body language role plays (parent reprimanding son/daughter for reason of choice).

Introduction to using video camera and being filmed. Analysis of role- plays and filming techniques.

* Deconstructing advertising images. (Cutting up sections of advertisements, putting them on to large card and annotating-analysing effect of language and visual images).

Homework - looking at posters in town to fill in information about them on chart.

Stereotyping in advertising - images of men and women
Slides and written information; *Selling Pictures* - BFI Study Pack.

Newspaper small ads Flat Sharing. Matching up Flats Offered with Flats Wanted (pairs). Make up advertisement.

Role play - choosing someone to share a flat (groups).

Homework for weekend: Buy a Saturday newspaper, choose 3 articles to read.

Write comments on the course so far.

### *Week Three*

Reviewing British newspapers - in pairs students describe news stories and articles they chose to read for homework. Partner chooses one of items to report back to class. Comparison of reports in different newspapers.Motorway attack
Inaccurate / biased reporting
*Front Page News* ILEA English Centre.

* Captioning exercise; putting captions to photographs (paired work).

*We both look ten years younger* - Women's World and Wella feature about sprucing up a couple's image, illustrating the blurred line between publications and the advertising they carry (directed reading - pairs).

Write article for course newspaper.

Choosing newspaper front page simulation - lay out, editing, etc from Chicago Times in *Can't Stop Talking.*

My nine day nightmare - article from London Evening Standard Oct 86 about bad experiences of a man on holiday - Gap filling exercise.

0800 hours Radio 4 news * Radio Covingham simulation radio broadcast from *Graded Simulations 1*, Ken Jones, Blackwell: 1985 (group work)

### *Week Four*

Watching TV programme *The Coca Cola Bottle* (BBC Design Awards). Freeze framing Cult objects - how they are presented - using teacher's Levi 501s and Sunday Times article on Volkswagen Beetle, Zippo lighter, Doc Marten boots

* Making and marketing a shoe simulation Selling a shoe. TV commercial simulation

Homework - choice of reading from How to Enjoy Paintings Exercises on exhibits by Rodin in a gallery from Listening - V Dunn and D Gruber OUP: 1987, pp 22-25.

* Art magazine committee role-play selecting paintings for double page spread from postcards from local Art gallery.
* Visit to local art gallery

## Details of marked activities

### *1 Transferring written work on to the word processor*

Students bring their written work to the computer room and type it on to the word processor. If problems arise with word processing students are encouraged to help each other. When the information is on the word processor, students work in pairs checking, suggesting improvements and modifying each other's work. In this way they can clarify what they mean verbally in order to make improvements in the written work together. They are also given the opportunity to discuss each other's ideas.

### *2 Free expression in the Art Room*

Each student is given a large sheet of paper and a variety of water-colours. They can paint whatever shapes they want, using whatever colours they want. Alongside, the students write about the ideas that the colours and shapes evoke - concrete and abstract images. When they have finished they can look at each other's images and discuss them further. This is particularly interesting for a multi-national group as colours often have different meanings in different countries. In Italy, for example, green signifies jealousy while in some other countries it is yellow.

### *3 Introducing visual analysis through slides*

A slide projector and whiteboard are used to present optical illusions and initiate discussion about perception. The slide sequences (from British Film Institute packs Reading Pictures and The Semiology of the Image) gradually reveal more of an image, encouraging the students to predict and analyse the components and composition of the images. They are also useful for developing awareness of the different conventions of the genres of photography - students are required to consider how holiday snaps look different from postcards, look different from advertisements, look different from reportage, etc . . . Projecting on to a whiteboard, the teacher can highlight/shade/trace over the image with a marker pen. Switching off the projector the students can see the basic elements "behind" the image on the whiteboard. To encourage students to look at images more closely and develop accurate description skills, a communicative paired activity can be set up. One partner, looking at a slide projected on the whiteboard, describes the image for the other (who cannot see it) to reproduce on paper. Pairs can then evaluate their effectiveness at carrying out the task and improving on it.

### *4 Body language role plays on video*

In pairs, students devise role plays involving a parent reprimanding a son/daughter for a reason of their choice. While role plays are being performed, other students take turns at videoing them. By the end of the lesson, all students will have taken part in role playing and videoing. The class reviews the videos, in terms of the language, significant body language and the filming techniques. Paralanguage is an interesting point of discussion because of its cultural variations; the students are able to use language in devising and performing role plays and in helping each other to use the video camera. This is a useful way to introduce being videoed without embarrassment as students are less self-conscious in role.

### *5 Deconstructing advertising images*

Analyse/deconstruct a colour magazine advertisement either by projecting a slide of an advertisement on to a whiteboard and highlighting the components with a pen, under students' instructions, or by cutting up a magazine advertisement into components, under students' instructions. Students then choose their own advertisement to deconstruct in pairs. They cut out the components, lay them on a large sheet of card and stick them down. They discuss the effectiveness of each part and beside each component they write comments about the use of symbols, words, captions, colours, stereotypes, etc. By choosing appropriate background colour, their own typography and style of "explosion", students not only become more active interpreters of an advertisement but also gain confidence in their own creativity.

### *6 Captioning exercise.*

Distribute a photocopy of a relatively mundane newspaper photograph of a person. Supply a lot of newspapers, scissors and glue for students to cut out different headlines and "anchor" the photograph with words. They do this in groups of 2 or 3. This activity not only has a language focus, but is a practical example of how words can be chosen to guide the meanings of images. (OAP BILL WINS POOLS, AMBASSADOR SHOT, MY NIGHTS OF SIN, etc).

### *7 Radio Covingham simulation*

Explain to students that in 50 minutes they will be presenting a radio news broadcast, lasting 10 minutes, on the air. Put the class into teams of 6 and tell them they can run the editorial team however they wish. Explain that during the 50 minutes, news may arrive at any

time, that they must choose the items of news they wish to broadcast and edit them if necessary, that they can make interviews out of some of the items and choose readers' letters to read out. During the actual simulation teacher involvement is limited to giving out the news items and analysing language use and the approach to the activity. By refraining from helping the students, the teacher obliges them to help each other and in simulation language use occurs naturally.

After working to the deadline of 50 minutes, the broadcasts are recorded, played back and analysed in terms of language and executing the task in the debriefing session.

### 8 *The Coca Cola bottle*

*Freeze-framing* In addition to listening for gist, students are required to analyse images on the television which have been freeze-framed and drawn on to the screen with a marker pen. Freeze-framing in this way allows exploitation with a marker pen in the same way as with the whiteboard and projector. It is also useful for analysis of visual composition of news bulletins, chat-shows, youth programmes, etc and it could be used to analyse framing, angle and distance in camera work.

### 9 *Making and marketing a shoe simulation*

Explain to students that in groups of six, they will be given 60 minutes to complete a model design for a shoe or a sandal plus a logo for their product and a sales talk. They are designing for next year's fashions and their market is 16 - 18 year old teenagers. One person in the group will have to model the prototype. The materials available are card, scissors, glue, ribbon, felt pens, sellotape, stapler and staples, felt pens, coloured tissue paper and plain paper. Deadlines are very important but they may vary according to market demands. The managing director (the teacher) will keep them informed. At the end of the time allowed, the students model the prototype, demonstrate their logo and give a sales talk, justifying their product for their market.

In this activity, the students can utilise the language and knowledge they have acquired over the course for a practical purpose. The activity can also be extended in another lesson to producing a video commercial.

### *10 Art magazine committee role play*

In groups of about six the students role-play an Art magazine committee meeting. The members, using postcards of various works of Art, select a limited number of works for their magazine double page spread. The works should be varied, as should the tastes and preferences of the role-play characters, to create argument (tastes and preferences should be given to the students on role-play cards before the activity begins). The committee should be given plenty of time to ruminate.

### *11 Visit to local Art gallery*

Leading on from the art magazine role play, it is appropriate to visit an art gallery where some of the paintings discussed are on display. The students can be prepared for the visit by being given the How to Enjoy Paintings book to browse through for homework. Then allow the trip to be relaxed and informal (no worksheets!). Once or twice, ask them to look around a particular room for five minutes, then stand by the painting or object which they are most attracted to. They can then describe it and tell the rest of the group why they are drawn to it. This should be personal and enjoyable; allow them to say as little or as much as they want.

## Projects undertaken by students

For two afternoons a week, the students were free to follow up the media theme through their own projects, working individually, in pairs or in groups. The brief was broad enough for them to follow up personal interests through the media (an enthusiasm for fashion led to work on media influence on fashion and a football interest developed into a project about the commercial relationship between football and the media). Because they had their own knowledge of media and because they had developed specific English, relevant to the subject during the course, the students were able to approach the projects independently and confidently. Materials and examples were readily available - teachers were only needed in an advisory capacity.

The projects chosen included:
*Pop videos* (deconstructing images, transcribing songs, analysing interplay of images, sounds and words)
*Pop videos* (spotting product placement)
*Analysing TV commercials* (especially use of language and image)
*British people's opinions of their media* (interviewing and collating information)

## Working collaboratively

Throughout the course the two of us worked collaboratively. Each of us was notionally responsible for one group of students, but we worked very closely together in planning for both groups. We devised weekly schemes of work which smoothed out and gave a context to daily planning. Knowing where we wanted to go enabled us to work at a steady pace which is important on a short, intensive course. We planned lessons together and found this to be an efficient and creative way of working, as our different specialisations in teaching English as a Foreign Language across the curriculum and Media Studies enabled us to bring a variety of language and subject teaching resources to the programme. We were able to bounce ideas off each other and achieve a positive exchange of views.

We extended collaborative working to the students so they mirrored our own methods of working. They were given many opportunities to approach tasks in pairs and groups. A positive learning atmosphere developed where students were willing to engage in open discussion with each other and with ourselves. As both groups were following the same programme, although not always at the same time, we could evaluate lessons we had both taught and advise each other on any necessary adjustments. On occasions we team taught the combined groups and students benefited from interacting with peers who had covered the same work but had developed different group dynamics and responses. They also benefited from having two teachers to consult. Working in this way enabled students to embark on projects with members of a different group.

## Summary

From teaching the English through Media course, the following conclusions can be drawn.

1 We were able to build upon the students' knowledge and ideas about the Media. They all had something to say about it so there was a genuine need for communication. This was highly motivating.
2 The students were able to understand aspects of British life more fully through studying English through Media.
3 Using the Mass Media for language exploitation meant there was an inherent language focus to each activity. We were constantly dealing with words,language and communication.

4 The Mass Media lent itself well to focusing not on language form but on its use.
5 Lexis concerning the Media is valuable for students to engage in everyday conversations.
6 The personal and social development aspect of analyzing Media, through evaluative listening and working in pairs and groups, encouraged spontaneity in language use.
7 The Media is rich in resources for language teaching.
8 The cyclical programme enabled students to appreciate the sense of it and by the end of the course, they could recognize the development of their thoughts from the beginning.
9 Because students were developing language about the subject and were interested in it, they were able to use the lessons as a basis for individual, paired and group projects where the teacher was only needed in an advisory capacity.
10 With teachers and students working collaboratively, a positive learning atmosphere developed where students would willingly engage in open discussion with each other and with us. There was a rich exchange of ideas.

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